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C O N F I D E N T I A L KINSHASA 001356

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [KPKO](#) [PREL](#) [CG](#)

SUBJECT: ATTACKS ON VOTER REGISTRATION CENTERS IN ITURI

Classified By: Poloff Gons Nachman for Reasons 1.4 B and D

1. (SBU) Armed elements attacked two voter registration centers in the areas of Bule (120 kms NE of Bunia) and Komanda (80 kms SE of Bunia) in Ituri on August 22, UN and Independent Electoral Commission (CEI) sources reported. According to the sources, armed elements from the Union of Congolese Patriots (UPC) militia attacked the Bule center as people were registering to vote. According to Petronille Vaweka, the Ituri District Commissioner, Congolese army (FARDC) soldiers responded to the incident and repelled the attackers before they could seize any of the registration equipment. During the exchange of gunfire, a local chief working for the CEI as a permanent witness at the center was hit by a militia bullet and killed. The District Commissioner confirmed that she saw armed UPC militia in Bule the day before the attack.

2. (SBU) In a separate but almost simultaneous incident, unknown armed elements attacked a voter registration center in Mangiva near Komanda, an area of Irumu territory controlled by the Front of Patriotic Resistance in Ituri (FRPI) militia. According to CEI sources, people fled the center and there were no reported casualties. Following these incidents, the CEI issued a press statement strongly condemning the attacks and calling on MONUC and FARDC to provide security to electoral workers and equipment.

Comment

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3. (C) It is unclear why UPC or FRPI militia would target voter registration centers since their Hema and Ngiti/Lendu communities have expressed overwhelming support for the electoral process. Knowledgeable NGO sources in Ituri speculate that remaining UPC and FRPI militia fighters have become criminal gangs, and the attackers could have acted on their own to steal valuable computer equipment. The almost simultaneous nature of the attacks, however, could also suggest some coordination and planning. In Vaweka's view, it is possible that Uganda is using these groups to intimidate the population and disrupt the ongoing voter registration process.

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